

Child Care Workforce Qualifications, Training, and Professional Development

nccic

The Office of Child Care's National Child Care Information and Technical Assistance Center

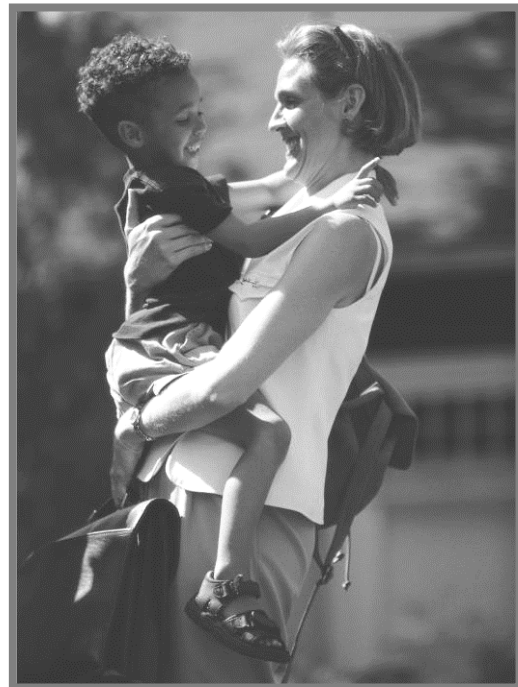
Working in the child care field can be exciting and rewarding, and it presents an opportunity to have an impact on the lives of children and their families in your community. Research has demonstrated the significance of a child's early years for brain development. It has also confirmed that one key to high-quality child care is having skilled adults in the program who can form strong relationships with the young children in their care.

If you are thinking about starting a career in the child care field, or taking on a different role, you might need to meet some specific qualifications before beginning your work with young children. The information in this resource guide is designed to help you identify the education, training, and experience you need to qualify for a teaching or administrative role in a child care center or to operate a family child care program in your home. Information is also included to help you locate training and professional development opportunities in your community, connect you with membership organizations in the early care and education field, and identify other resources in your State that may be useful to your professional development.

Please note that the information in this guide is specific to the qualifications and training needed to work directly with children or as an administrator in the **licensed child care market**—settings such as child care centers and family child care homes that must meet State licensing requirements. Please be aware that there are many other settings and roles in the early care and education field that have their own qualification requirements. Also, individual child care programs may have their own policies for hiring staff.

The information includes the following:

- ◆ [Types of licensed child care settings](#)
- ◆ [State requirements for child care facilities](#)
- ◆ [Common roles in child care centers and family child care](#)
- ◆ [State requirements for providers in child care programs](#)
- ◆ [Training and/or education requirements in early childhood education](#)
- ◆ [Trainings that meet State licensing requirements](#)
- ◆ [Community resources available to help decide on a child care career](#)
- ◆ [Finding trainings that meet State requirements](#)
- ◆ [Scholarships or other financial assistance available to help pay for trainings](#)
- ◆ [Obtaining a Child Development Associate \(CDA\) credential](#)
- ◆ [Early care and education membership organizations and](#)



[professional associations](#)

- ◆ [Additional resources about careers in child care](#)

This guide contains examples about topics related to child care. Additional resources are available via the NCCIC Online Library, which can be accessed at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/library/index.cfm?do=oll.search>. NCCIC does not endorse any non-Federal organization, publication, or resource.

Types of licensed child care settings

[Back](#)

There are two common types of child care settings that are part of the licensed child care market—**child care centers** and **family child care homes**.

Child care centers are facilities where care typically is provided to children in a nonresidential building with different age-group classrooms. Care is provided for less than 24 hours per day. State child care licensing regulations include definitions of the types of child care centers that must meet licensing requirements. These definitions often include a minimum number of children and/or a minimum number of hours the facility operates to determine whether it must be licensed.

Family child care homes are facilities where care typically is provided to children in the provider's residence. Family child care homes usually provide care for a small group of children of mixed ages and have one care provider. As with centers, States have definitions of the types of family child care homes that must be licensed. These definitions are usually based on the number of children in care. For example, several States require family child care homes to be licensed if the provider cares for at least one unrelated child or the children from one family, but many States also allow homes with three or more children to operate without a license. Many States license two types of family child care homes—a **small home** that has a small number of children and usually one care provider, and a **large/group home** that usually has a larger number of children and a provider and assistant.

The types of child care settings that are required to be licensed can be very different from State to State. You can find out about your State's requirements by contacting the State child care licensing agency. A directory of all State child care licensing agencies is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=licensing>.

State requirements for child care facilities

[Back](#)

Licensing is a process administered by State governments that gives permission to child care facilities to operate. Licensing sets a baseline of requirements below which it is illegal to operate, unless the facility is legally exempt from licensing. States have regulations that include the requirements child care centers and family child care homes must comply with and policies to support the enforcement of those regulations. These regulations and enforcement policies vary widely from State to State. Some States may call this regulatory process "certification" or "registration." For the purposes of this guide, the terms "licensing" or "licensed" are used to represent all of the State regulatory processes.

State child care licensing regulations help protect the health and safety of children in out-of-home care. Licensing helps prevent different forms of harm to children, including risks from the spread of disease, fire and other building safety hazards, and injury. Licensing also helps prevent developmental impairment from children's lack of healthy relationships with adults, and regulates adequate supervision and developmentally appropriate activities. The National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC) has the full text of State child care licensing regulations on its Web site at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>. Contact information for all State licensing agencies is available on NCCIC's Web site at

Role Names in State Regulations

States vary in the names they use for the **teacher** role in child care licensing regulations. The following are some of the names States use:

- Assistant group supervisor;
- Associate teacher;
- Caretaker;
- Child care worker;
- Group teacher;
- Primary caregiver;
- Senior staff;
- Teacher;
- Teacher-caregiver;
- Assistant to head of group;
- Caregiver;
- Child care supervisor;
- Group leader;
- Lead caregiver;
- Program leader;
- Staff; and
- Teacher assistant.

<http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=licensing>. Information about licensing is also available at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/topics/licensing>.

Within the licensing regulations for centers and family child care homes are requirements for the people who work there. As explained further in this guide, these requirements include specific qualifications, such as being a certain age, training and/or education to complete prior to working in a facility, training to complete after being hired, health requirements, and background checks, among other things.

Common roles in child care centers and family child care [Back](#)

There are several different roles you can fulfill if you are working in a child care setting. These are the most common:

Child Care Center Roles:

- Teacher;
- Master teacher;
- Assistant teacher;
- Aide; and
- Director.

Family Child Care Home Roles:

- Small family child care home provider;
- Large/Group family child care home provider; and
- Family child care assistant.

The most common staff role for **child care centers** is **teacher**, which can be defined as a staff person who can be solely responsible for a group of children. States may use other names for this role, such as caregiver, child care worker, or group leader.

Some States require at least one teacher in a program or classroom to be qualified at a higher level. This position is often called a lead teacher, head teacher, chief caregiver, fully qualified teacher, child care associate, or supervisor. This role is generically labeled **master teacher** in this guide to reflect that this person is required to have more training, experience, and/or skills than other teachers.

Role Names in State Regulations

States vary in the names they use for the **master teacher** role in child care licensing regulations. The following are some of the names States use:

- Assistant director;
- Child care associate;
- Fully qualified teacher;
- Group supervisor;
- Head of group;
- Head teacher;
- Lead caregiver;
- Lead teacher;
- Master teacher; and
- Teacher.

Many States also have requirements for **assistant teachers** and **aides** who work with children in child care centers under the supervision of an individual who is qualified as a teacher or master teacher.

A **director** of a child care center is the administrator who is ultimately responsible for establishing the program, choosing and supervising all other staff, managing both income and expenditures, and maintaining program quality.

If you wish to operate a child care program in your home, typically called **family child care**, your role would be a **family child care provider**. Some States have more than one type of family child care home. A **small family child care home** is a child care program located in a residence, generally with one provider and a small number of children. A **large/group family child care home** is also typically located in a residence, but usually has one provider and an **assistant** and a larger number of children. States vary in how they name these types of child care facilities and in how they define which ones must be licensed.

State requirements for providers in child care programs [Back](#)

To find out the requirements for child care center staff and family child care home providers in your State, you can contact the State child care licensing agency. A directory of all State child care licensing agencies is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=licensing>.

In addition, the National Resource Center for Health and Safety in Child Care and Early Education (NRC) has the full text of all State child care licensing regulations on its Web site at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>.

The following are explanations of the different types of licensing requirements you might have to meet to work in a child care center or family child care home.

Minimum Age Requirements

Most States require child care center staff and family child care providers to be a certain age to work in or operate a program legally. The child care licensing regulations will include this age. For example, most States require child care center directors to be at least 21 years old, teachers to be at least 18 years old, and assistant teachers and aides to be at least 16 years old.

High School Diploma or Equivalent

Many States require center staff and family child care providers to have a high school diploma or equivalent, such as passing the General Education Development Test (GED), prior to working in or operating a program. This is especially true in States where the minimum age requirement for a particular role is 18 years old.

Training and/or education requirements in early childhood education

[Back](#)

Many States require providers to have **preservice qualifications**—training and/or education in early care and education topics completed prior to working in, operating, or assuming a new role in a licensed child care program. The amount of training and/or education required varies widely from State to State. NCCIC maintains tables that show the minimum amount of training and/or education in early childhood education required by State licensing agencies to qualify for center director, teacher, master teacher, and family child care provider roles. The tables include the following:

- *Minimum Preservice Qualifications, Orientation/Initial Licensure, and Annual Ongoing Training Hours for Family Child Care Providers in 2011* (July 2011). <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/cclr-famcare.html>
- *Minimum Preservice Qualifications, Administrative Training, and Annual Ongoing Training Hours for Center Directors in 2011* (July 2011). <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/cclr-directors.html>
- *Minimum Requirements for Preservice Qualifications and Annual Ongoing Training Hours for Center Teaching Roles in 2011* (July 2011). <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/cclr-teachers.html>

Most State child care licensing regulations include many options for qualifying for a particular role. State licensing agencies have procedures they use to evaluate the qualifications of providers seeking to work in child care centers or operate family child care homes.

Work Experience

In addition to preservice qualifications for training and education, many States require that center staff and family child care providers come to their roles with some experience working with children. Some States require experience as the only qualification for a particular role, while others combine experience with education and training in their qualifications. State child care licensing regulations typically specify the amount of experience required and might specify that people verify that the experience was in a particular setting, was with a certain age group of children, and/or was supervised.

Orientation

Many States require new employees, especially in child care centers, to complete an orientation training that includes information about the facility's policies and procedures. This orientation is often given by the director of the center or the operator of the family child care home. State licensing regulations often specify the content of this training. States also require center staff and family child care home providers to complete training about the licensing process and regulations.



Ongoing Training Hours

Most States require child care center staff and family child care providers to complete a specific number of hours of training each year. The content of this training is generally related to the care and education of young children and is completed through a variety of methods, such as adult education courses, college courses, conference workshops, distance learning, and inservice training provided by the center director or family child care home operator. Child care licensing regulations include the specific number of hours of required training and any requirements for training content.

NCCIC maintains tables that also include the amount of ongoing training hours required for provider roles. The tables include the following:

- *Minimum Preservice Qualifications, Orientation/Initial Licensure, and Annual Ongoing Training Hours for Family Child Care Providers in 2011* (July 2011). <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/cclr-famcare.html>
- *Minimum Preservice Qualifications, Administrative Training, and Annual Ongoing Training Hours for Center Directors in 2011* (July 2011). <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/cclr-directors.html>
- *Minimum Requirements for Preservice Qualifications and Annual Ongoing Training Hours for Center Teaching Roles in 2011* (July 2011). <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/pubs/cclicensingreq/cclr-teachers.html>

Health and Safety Training

In addition to the annual ongoing training hours, most States require child care staff to complete training in first aid and/or CPR. Many States also require training in other health and safety topics, such as the following:

- Administration of medication;
- Care of sick children;
- Child abuse and neglect prevention and reporting;
- Fire safety;
- Hand washing;
- Prevention of HIV/AIDS and blood-borne pathogens;
- Prevention of the spread of communicable diseases/universal precautions;
- Reducing the risk of Sudden Infant Death Syndrome (SIDS); and
- Water safety/lifeguard training.

Health Requirements

Most States require child care center staff and family child care providers to show proof that they are physically fit to care for children. To show they are in good health, staff and providers may need to provide the licensing agency with statements from physicians, reports of physical examinations, and/or proof of immunizations and tuberculosis tests.

Background Checks

Many States require that people who work in child care centers and family child care homes have not committed a crime or been accused of abuse or neglect of children in their care. States often require staff and providers to

undergo at least one type of criminal background check, either a check of criminal history records (which may be done with fingerprints), child abuse and neglect registries, and/or sex offender registries.

Trainings that meet State licensing requirements

[Back](#)

State licensing agencies have ways to evaluate the qualifications of staff in child care centers and family child care homes. You can contact the licensing agency in your State to find out whether the training that you have completed or plan to complete will meet State requirements. A directory of all State child care licensing agencies is available in the State Contacts section of the NCCIC Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=licensing>. NRC has the full text of State child care licensing regulations on its Web site at <http://nrckids.org/STATES/states.htm>.

Community resources to help decide on a child care career [Back](#)

Many States have a **professional development system** that provides information, support, and other resources to help people who work, or may want to work, in the early care and education field. These State systems vary widely in the services and resources they offer. Your State's professional development system may include some of the following resources:

- Career counseling and other professional development planning tools;
- A registry to track the training that you have obtained;
- A training calendar and/or database of state-approved trainers and training sessions;
- Core knowledge or competency documents that define what providers need to know, understand, and be able to do to work effectively with young children; and/or
- A career lattice or ladder that defines pathways to help you better understand the variety of roles, responsibilities, and requirements within the early care and education field in your State.

A directory of professional development contacts is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=pd> that includes the names and contact information for these organizations.

Finding trainings that meet the State requirements

[Back](#)

Local child care resource and referral (CCR&R) agencies can provide information about training opportunities, professional development initiatives, and other resources in your area. Child Care Aware is a national nonprofit initiative that can help you find the CCR&R agency in your area. Call Child Care Aware at 800-424-2246 or visit the Web at www.childcareaware.org/en/.

In addition, many States have systems that provide information about training and other resources to help people who work in the early care and education field grow professionally. Many of these systems have a training calendar or database of trainers and/or training sessions. A directory of professional development contacts is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=pd> that includes the names and contact information of these organizations.

Scholarships or other financial assistance available to help pay for trainings [Back](#)

Scholarship Resources

Some State professional development systems have information about scholarship programs and other support for training and education, such as wage supplements and apprenticeship programs. A directory of professional development contacts is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=pd> that includes the names and contact information for these organizations.

The State child care licensing agency may also have information about scholarships. A directory of all State licensing agencies is available on NCCIC's Web site at <http://nccic.acf.hhs.gov/statedata/dirs/display.cfm?title=licensing>.

Local CCR&R agencies support child care providers with training and technical assistance to help improve the quality of child care, and they may have information about scholarships. Child Care Aware is a national initiative that can help you find the CCR&R in your area. Call Child Care Aware at 800-424-2246 or visit the Web at www.childcareaware.org/en/.

T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood® Project Scholarships

Child Care Services Association

Phone: 919-967-3272

<http://www.childcareservices.org/ps/teach.html>

The T.E.A.C.H. [Teacher Education and Compensation Helps] Early Childhood Project gives scholarships to child care workers to complete coursework in early childhood education and to increase their compensation. The project is an umbrella for a variety of different scholarship programs for teachers, directors, and family child care providers working in regulated child care programs in 21 States across the country. All T.E.A.C.H. scholarships link continuing education with increased compensation and require recipients and their sponsoring child care programs to share the cost.

The T.E.A.C.H. Early Childhood Project is currently operating in the following 21 States: Alabama, Arizona, Colorado, Delaware, Florida, Indiana, Iowa, Kansas, Michigan, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, Nevada, New Mexico, North Carolina (founding State), Ohio, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, Virginia, West Virginia, and Wisconsin. State contacts are available at www.childcareservices.org/ps/state_contacts.html.

Federal Financial Aid

Federal Student Aid Information Center

U.S. Department of Education

Phone: 800-4-FED-AID (800-433-3243) or TTY 800-730-8913

<http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/index.jsp>.

The U.S. Department of Education's Federal Student Aid programs are the largest source of student financial aid in the United States, providing nearly 70 percent of all student aid. Available resources are described in the following publication:

- *Funding Education Beyond High School: The Guide to Federal Student Aid* is a comprehensive resource about student financial aid. Grants, loans, and work-study are the three major forms of aid available through the Department of Education's Federal Student Aid office. Updated each award year, the guide explains the programs and how to apply for them. It is available in English and Spanish at http://studentaid.ed.gov/students/publications/student_guide/index.html.

To apply for Federal aid and many other State student aid programs, students must complete a Free Application for Federal Student Aid (FAFSA). Information about FAFSA is available at <http://studentaid.ed.gov/PORTALSWebApp/students/english/fafsa.jsp> and www.fafsa.ed.gov.

Obtaining a CDA credential

[Back](#)

States commonly allow someone to qualify for a teaching or administrative role in a child care facility if they have obtained a CDA credential. The CDA is a competency-based credential awarded to those who work with children ages birth to 5 years old. A CDA may be earned in three settings/roles: center based (with two age groups, birth to 3 years old and 3 to 5 years old), family child care, and home visitor. In addition, a candidate may earn a bilingual specialization. The CDA Credentialing Program is administered by the Council for Professional Recognition. For additional information, call the Council at 800-424-4310, email webmaster@cdacouncil.org, or visit the Web at www.cdacouncil.org.

Early care and education membership organizations and professional associations

[Back](#)

The following are membership organizations that focus on early childhood issues in alphabetical order. These organizations also have publications and resource materials available to the public.

American Montessori Society

281 Park Avenue South
New York, NY 10010-6102
212-358-1250 or 800-238-1133, ext. 201
<http://www.amshq.org/>

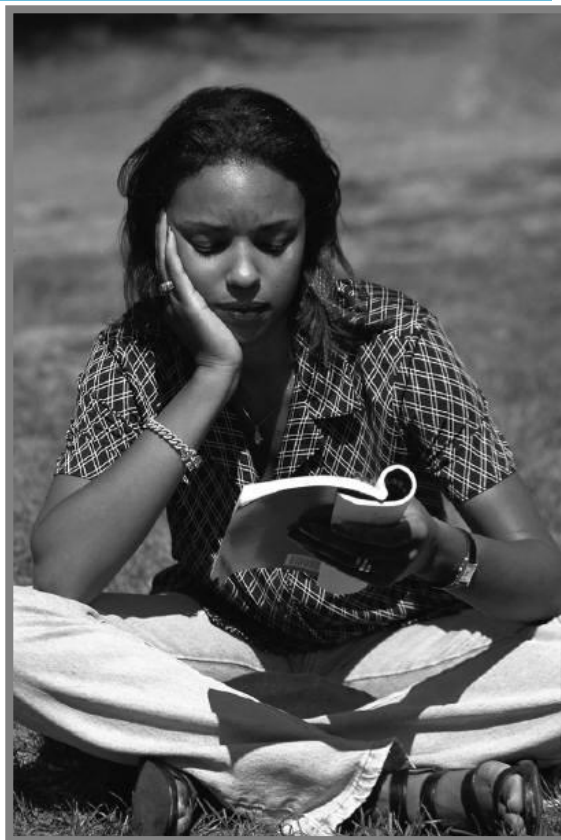
Council for Exceptional Children

Division of Early Childhood
2900 Crystal Drive, Suite 1000
Arlington, VA 22202-3557
888-232-7733 or TTY 866-915-5000
www.cec.sped.org

National AfterSchool Association

8400 Westpark Drive, Suite 200
McLean, VA 22102
703-610-9002
<http://www.naaweb.org/>

National Association for the Education of Young Children
1313 L Street, Suite 500



Washington, DC 20005
800-424-2460 or 202-232-8777
www.naeyc.org

National Association for Family Child Care

1743 W. Alexander Street
Salt Lake City, UT 84119
800-359-3817
<http://nafcc.org/>

National Child Care Association

1325 G Street NW, Suite 500
Washington, DC 20005
800-543-7161
<http://www.nccanet.org/>

National Head Start Association

1651 Prince Street
Alexandria, VA 22314
703-739-0875
<http://www.nhsa.org/>

Additional resources about careers in child care [Back](#)

The following resources provide a starting point for exploring the range of career opportunities in early childhood education, and links to national organizations.

- *Who Are These People? A Guide for Child Care Professionals* (2003), by the National Academy of Sciences, is a booklet about early childhood development and education for adults who care for infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. For additional information, call 888-624-8373 or visit www.nap.edu/catalog.php?record_id=10696.
- *Occupational Outlook Handbook* (2010–11 Edition), by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor, is designed to provide valuable assistance to those making decisions about their future work lives. For additional information, visit <http://www.bls.gov/oco/ocos170.htm>.
- *Child Daycare Services* (n.d.), by the Bureau of Labor Statistics, U. S. Department of Labor, provides information about the nature of the industry, working conditions, employment, occupations, training and advancement, earnings, outlook, and more. <http://www.bls.gov/oco/cg/cgs032.htm>
- The National Association for the Education of Young Children produces many publications for early childhood professionals, including resources about program administration, relationships with families, professional development, the early childhood profession, careers, developmentally appropriate practice, and public policy and advocacy. To access the publications, visit <http://www.naeyc.org/publications>.
- *National Directory of Early Childhood Teacher Preparation Institutions* (n.d.), by the Council for Professional Recognition and the National Center for Early Development and Learning, contains listings for nearly 1,400 2- and 4-year colleges. This resource is available at <http://www.cdacouncil.org/the-resource-center/directory-of-training-institutions>. For additional information, call the Council for Professional Recognition at 800-424-4310 or 202-265-9090.